

Spring 2006

AFS FIRELINE

A BLM Alaska Fire Service Newsletter

BLM

Preparation Underway for '06 Fire Season

FIRE OPERATIONS: TRAINING FOR WILDLAND FIRES

By Ed Strong, Chief
Division of Fire Operations

Preparation for Fire Season 2006 began March 6 for the Alaska Fire Service's Division of Fire Operations when eight Alaska smokejumpers began three weeks of Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training to augment the current staff of qualified EMTs.

Smokejumper Spotters, Paracargo Specialists and Air Tactical Group Supervisors also began preparing for wildland fire operations by attending one-and-a-half weeks of American Council on Exercise (ACE) training and spotter refresher courses. Paracargo specialists prepare equipment and supplies for aerial delivery.

Other activities included Loft personnel undergoing parachute packing refresher training that included rigging "live" parachutes after passing inspection of their practice packs.

Returning jumpers attended a refresher course March 29-April 28, tuning up their skills in aircraft, jump and emergency procedures. They also familiarized themselves with the jump

equipment, proper use and care of equipment, and parachute handling techniques.

The four-week long training for smokejumper candidates began April 23. New jumpers or "rookies" learned how to safely exit aircraft, deploy their parachutes, and land. Not only mentally



Alaska Fire Service Smokejumpers conducting a pre-jump equipment check before the first jump of the season on April 5. From left to right are Evan Carp, Mike Bradley, Brandon Kobayashi, and Gary Baumgartner. Photo: Kevin Mclver/AFS

challenging, personnel undergo some of the most physically demanding training before earning the coveted title of "smokejumper."

The Fire Specialists Section (FSS) had 15 returning employees along with five new Fire Specialists for this season. The FSS are involved in a variety of

activities, including preparing for fire specialist training, which is an intense two week course for all new personnel. The FSS also manages the two-week Emergency Firefighter (EFF) Helicopter Crew Member program. This year, crew members from last years rookie class returned to further their fire training and to refresh their helicopter crew member skills.

Other FSS personnel helped coordinate a variety of other interagency training, and helped conduct Annual Fireline Safety Refresher training. The section also assisted several of the fire management zones with their EFF training, coordinated aerial firing training, and worked on prescribed fire burn plans for the Chena Lakes Flood Plain.

The Division of Operation's Hotshot crews also began preparing for the upcoming

fire season. Several crew members participated in the EMT class, while others underwent advanced fire training. Additionally, the crews completed 80 hours of mandatory fire training that is required of Type 1 Interagency Hotshot Crews each year.

Alaska Fire Service



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AFS Manager's Corner

Welcome to all our new and returning employees. The outlook for the 2006 fire season is for more warm weather that will bring fire activity to the Interior.

Last year was again full of activity with the final numbers coming in third for the highest number of acres burned in Alaska's recorded history at 4.6 million acres.

I would like to express my gratitude to our employees, family members, partners and friends for the outstanding support provided during the 2005 fire season. Our success was certainly a team effort.

According to estimates for this fire season, we can expect similar weather patterns to last year, so at best, we should plan for another very active year.

As preparation for the 2006 season picks up, I ask each and every employee to continue the professionalism exuded last year.

We have new employees who must be trained in Alaska fire operations and we have current personnel that will participate in the annual fireline refresher.



Whether a rookie or a veteran, let's continue to build the skills necessary to get the job done safely. We want everyone to come home—so let's do it right every time.

I look forward to meeting the new crews this year and likewise look to seeing our seasonal and full-time employees meeting the challenges that are ahead of us.

Again, thank you for the effort and know that your work is appreciated.

***Scott Billing, Manager
BLM Alaska Fire Service***

Boeing 727 aircraft from Northern Air Cargo being loaded on April 26 with supplies bound for the Galena Station. Each year, supplies and equipment are flown to the AFS facility to prepare for the upcoming wildland fire season and stock the warehouse.

Photo: Kevin McIver/AFS



Partners Host Media Fire Awareness Workshop

*By Kevin L. McIver
AFS Public Affairs Officer*

Recently the Alaska Fire Service along with area partners held the First Annual Fairbanks Interagency Media Fire Awareness Workshop.

The March 15 event was held at the Fairbanks North Star Borough Administrative Center Assembly Chambers in Fairbanks, Alaska. Designed for the media, the workshop provided information on wildland fire and prescribed fire activities, introduced key fire contacts from local, state and federal agencies to attendees.

Information was also provided on basic weather, fire behavior, smoke information and impact on health, and safety and equipment.



Alaska Division of Forestry Fairbanks Area Fire Management Officer Robert Schmoll identifies and explains use of personal protective equipment to workshop participants. Photo: Kevin McIver/AFS

Spring at AFS



Top left: Smokejumpers preparing for the first jump in 2006 shortly before boarding the aircraft.

Top right: Don Erickson at his retirement party.

Center: Smokejumper preparing to land.

Bottom left: Participants at the Annual Fireline Refresher Training.

Bottom right: Moose that rested briefly outside the AFS Headquarters.

Photos: Kevin McIver/AFS



2006 Prescribed Fire Projects

By Kevin L. McIver
AFS Public Affairs Officer

The Alaska Fire Service is planning several prescribed fire projects to help federal and military partners reduce the potential for wildland fires that could threaten communities or military facilities.

Projects include removing fuels where there exists a high potential for fires around military weapon ranges and training areas. Military activities conducted during dry weather can lead to a high potential for fires around these facilities. Areas include Fort Wainwright, the Donnelly Training Area adjacent to Fort Greely, and Fort Richardson.

There is also an interagency prescribed fire project in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service being planned near Beaver, Alaska. Work will also continue on the BLM Glennallen Field Office's Alphabet Hills project to improve wildlife habitat, particularly for moose. AFS is also planning a project for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the North Pole area to reduce vegetation thereby preserving the hydraulic integrity of the flood way.

In all, 14 prescribed fire projects are planned for federal and military land managers in Alaska that will not only help enhance the environment, but will help reduce the size and intensity of potential wildland fires.

Snapshot of 2006 Prescribed Fire Projects

Beaver

- Beaver Wildland Urban Interface

Eielson Air Force Base

- Husky Drop Zone
- Manchu Small Arms Range

Fort Wainwright

- Small Arms Complex
- Stuart Creek Impact Area

Fort Greely/Delta Junction Area

- Bollio Lakes
- Jarvis North
- Nevada Lakes Impact Area
- Oklahoma Impact Area
- Texas Range

Fort Richardson

- Fort Richardson Complex
- Three Ranges

Glennallen Area

- Alphabet Hills

North Pole Area

- Chena Lakes Overflow



Above: Planned prescribed fire projects by general area. Specific project information can be found on the next page or on the AFS web site at: <http://fire.ak.blm.gov> (click on prescribed fire link).

Left: Map of Alaska illustrating where the majority of prescribed fire projects are located.

Summary of 2006 Prescribed Fire Projects

Project	Location	Acres	Land Manager	Project Contact	Telephone
Beaver WUI	Beaver, AK	140	Beaver Village Cooperation & Yukon Flats NWR	James Higgins	(907) 356-5561
Chena Lakes Overflow Area	Vicinity North Pole, AK	130	US Army Corps of Engineers	Ilene Penas	(907) 356-5668
Husky Drop Zone	Eielson Air Force Base, AK	400	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Manchu	Eielson Air Force Base, AK	435	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Small Arms Complex	Fort Wainwright, AK	2,053	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Stuart Creek Impact Area	Fort Wainwright, AK	4,300	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Bolio Lakes	Donnelly Training Area adjacent to Ft. Greely, AK	3,906	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Jarvis North	Donnelly Training Area adjacent to Ft. Greely, AK	198	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Nevada Lakes	Donnelly Training Area adjacent to Ft. Greely, AK	6,900	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Oklahoma Impact Area	Donnelly Training Area adjacent to Ft. Greely, AK	48,494	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Texas Range	Donnelly Training Area adjacent to Ft. Greely, AK	3,708	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 356- 5875
Alphabet Hills	56 miles southeast of Glennallen, AK	20,000-30,000	BLM	John A. Rego	(907) 822-3217
Fort Richardson Complex	Fort Richardson, AK	46.1	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 822-3217
Three Ranges	Fort Richardson, AK	272.62	US Army Alaska	Tami DeFries	(907) 822-3217

Prescribed Fire Poster

The poster to the right is part of the Alaska Fire Service's 2006 Prescribed Fire Program.

To download a copy of the poster, or for more information on the program, visit the AFS web site at:

fire.ak.blm.gov

You may also request a copy by writing:

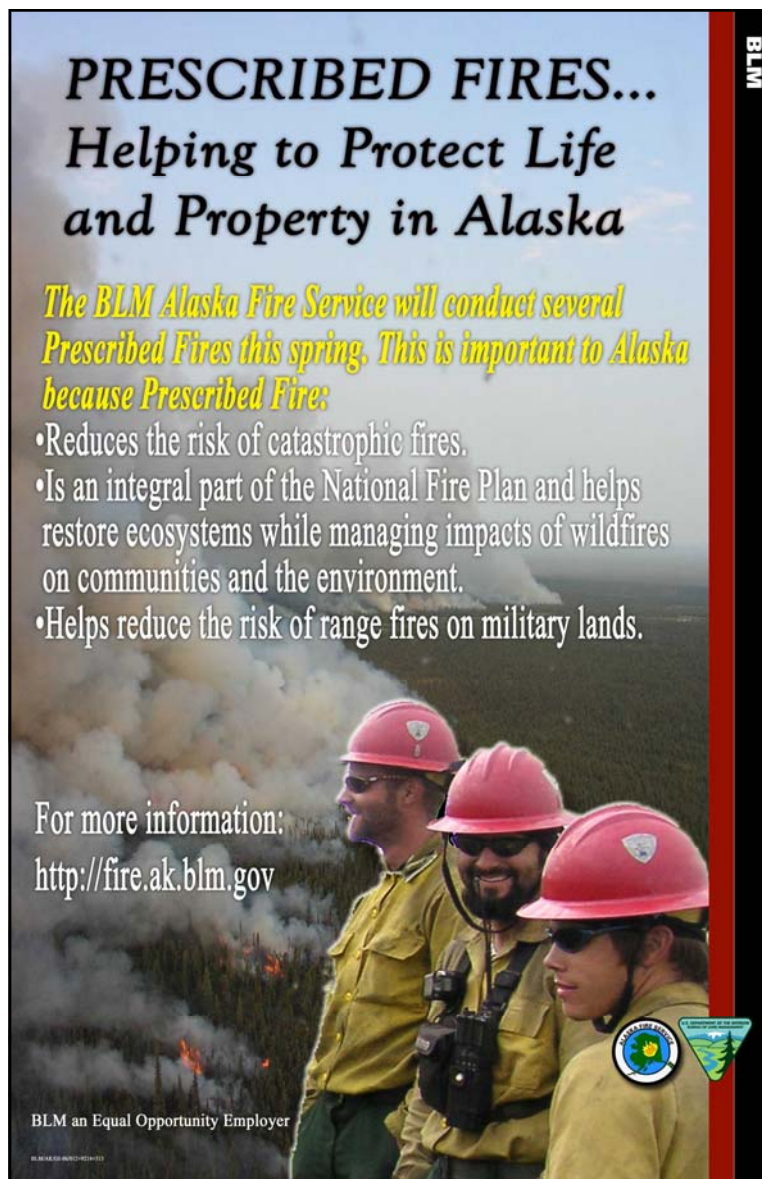
Alaska Fire Service
PO Box 35005
Public Affairs Poster
Fort Wainwright, AK
99703-0005

Or via email at:

kevin_mciver@ak.blm.gov

Be sure to include your name, address, and the number of copies that you would like to receive.

*Thank You,
AFS Public Affairs Office*



For information on wildland fires this summer go to:

<http://fire.ak.blm.gov>

At the BLM Alaska Fire Service Web Site You'll Find:

- ~The Daily Fire Report and other news;
- ~The Situation Report with information on all fires in Alaska;
- ~Maps including fire perimeters;
- ~Weather, fire danger outlook, and Red Flag Warning information.

BLM Alaska Aviation Activities

By Jim Truitt

BLM Alaska State Aviation Manager

As we approach the 2006 season, the BLM Alaska Division of Aviation is busy preparing on several fronts.

We are conducting aviation training for a variety of users, including: basic aviation training or B-3, Helicopter Manager initial and refresher training, and, new for this year, training for remote fuel site management.

Pilots are engaged in annual training that includes simulator training, emergency procedures, and mandatory classes at the National Aviation Office in Boise.

Non-fire activities have also commenced with several survey and capture flights conducted by BLM biologists with pilots from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and supported by contract aircraft and pilots. These non-fire flying activities continue to increase in the number of hours and flights, and are part of the Aviation Division's responsibility for oversight and assistance.

The Aviation Division is also busy with personnel issues including filling a current vacancy and hiring for a new position created to replace the position vacated by our retiring Supervisory Pilot.



Personnel prepare aircraft for smokejumper drop on April 5 at Fort Wainwright. Aviation support during wildland fire operations include: transporting personnel, supplies and equipment; conducting aerial reconnaissance; and conducting aerial suppression. Photo: Kevin McIver/AFS

This season we will have a full-time Aviation Safety Manager on the Aviation staff to assist with field and local flying safety initiatives.

We have also gained approval to allow a training position to shadow our Helicopter Specialist as he enters his last months before retirement and are in the process of releasing the vacancy announcements.

Overall, the BLM Alaska Division of Aviation is operating at full capacity and looking forward to another safe and successful flying season.

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Send Comments or Suggestions to: AFS Fireline, BLM Alaska Fire Service, P.O. Box 35005, Fort Wainwright, AK 99703-0005, or via email to: kevin_mcliver@blm.gov

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Kevin McIver, Editor



**AFS
Smokejumpers
conducting
parachute drills
prior to the first
jump of the
season. Read the
complete story
on the front
page.
Photo: Kevin
McIver /AFS**



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